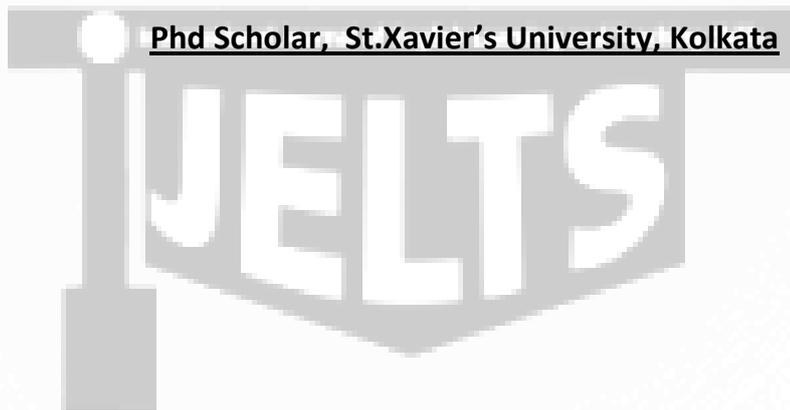


Translation as a method of learning and teaching English

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Abstract-

This paper argues that translation can be an effective method of learning and teaching English. It explores various translation theories and methods to show how the act of translation may enhance the learning and teaching of English. Walter Benjamin's essay "The Task of the Translator" is analyzed in reference to how translation recreates the values that accrue to a foreign text over time. Vladimir Nabokov's essay "Problems of Translation: Onegin in English" is analyzed for its emphasis on the value of literal translation. Eugene Nida's essay "Principles of Correspondence" is analyzed for the different types of equivalence it proposes. Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury's ideas of translation are analyzed and their argument that literary translations are facts of the target system is investigated. George Steiner's essay "The Hermeneutic Motion" is analyzed for its view that translation is an interpretation of the foreign text that is profoundly sympathetic, exploitive, and ethically restorative. I analyze Steiner's argument that language is not instrumental in communicating meaning but is constitutive in reconstructing meaning. Hans J. Vermeer's essay "Skopos and Commission in Translational Action" is analyzed for its idea of the translators skopos or aim as a decisive factor in translation. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay "The Politics of Translation" is analyzed for its advocacy of literalism in postcolonial translation issues. By exploring and understanding the various relevant translation theories and methods, I will show how the learning and teaching of English may be done through translation.

Keywords- Translation, English, Benjamin, Spivak, Nabokov.

The act of translation is an effective method of learning and teaching English. Translation theory, by providing different ways of translating, gives the translator complete command over the target language. Translation theory by improving the practice of translation also improves the acquisition and learning of language. When comments on translation first appeared, they were situated in the academic discipline of rhetoric. Translation is a useful pedagogical exercise for learning language, including the use of language in rhetoric.

Translation theory in the first quarter of the 20th century was rooted in German literary and philosophical traditions, in hermeneutics and existential phenomenology. These traditions assume that language is constitutive in its representation of reality. Translation is seen as an interpretation that transforms the foreign text. 19th century practitioners treated translation as a creative force which would build languages, literatures, and nations. At the start of the 20th century translation is a focus of theoretical speculation and formal innovation. This period saw the rise of the idea of the autonomy of translation. The translation is a text in its own right, an independent work of signification. In Walter Benjamin's essay, "The Task of the Translator" a translation participates in the afterlife of the foreign text.

In Benjamin's "The Task of the translator" a range of translation experiences are foregrounded. Bible translation, the translations of German romanticism, and those of Goethe and Stefan George are all discussed in Benjamin's text. 'The Task of the Translator' is the prologue to Benjamin's translation of Baudelaire. The prologue does not discuss the work and is a discourse on translation that is removed from all reference to examples. The task of poetry is to dissolve the foreign into language. Benjamin is concerned with literary translation. He is concerned with the translation of both literary texts and sacred texts. For Benjamin certain poetic works approach the sacred. For him great translation can straddle the sacred and the literary. The task of the translator states that the literary work is not structured like a message. The essence of literature cannot be determined on the basis of its reception. A work of literature does not presuppose a receiver. A literary text does not concern itself with the receiver. The translator encounters language that turns away from us and from utilitarian purposes. Translation is a way of modulating a work. Translation allows a work to be fully realized. Translation is not a search for equivalents. For Benjamin, the work of art does not presuppose an audience. Translation gives expression to the innermost relationship of languages to one another. The task of the translator is to strike the echo of the original. For

Benjamin, recovering pure language for linguistic usage is the stupendous and sole ability of translation. The interlinear version of holy scripture is for Benjamin the ideal of all translation.

For Benjamin, translation is an art form in itself. Art is not about moral lessons. Translation is not about communicating the meaning of the original. The translators work serves the purpose of expressing the innermost relationship of languages to one another. Benjamin's concept of pure language refers to a unity of all the languages of the world. Translation reveals the relationship between languages.

Nabokov demands from the translator the production of ideal versions of translation. Nabokov wants a translation that is close to the source language, devoid of Anglo-American poetic diction and heavily annotated. Nabokov rejects paraphrastic versions. He values literal translation, historical scholarship and detailed commentary.

For Nabokov, readability is not the measure of good translation as it the result of commercial interpretation or poetization. He rejects free translation and rejects rendering the spirit of the text. He values literal translation that preserves the textual sense. He states that Andrew Marvell may be a model when translating Pushkin in verse. For Nabokov Pushkin was a product of Russian culture and French literature. He wants the translator to reproduce with absolute exactitude the whole text. He states that Onegin has been mistranslated into many languages. He wants translations with copious footnotes.

Eugene Nida distinguishes between dynamic and formal varieties of correspondence. Nida states that there is no absolute correspondence between languages. Nida states that there are fundamentally two different types of equivalence, one formal and the other dynamic. Formal equivalence focuses on the message itself in both form and content. It is concerned with correspondences such as poetry to poetry, sentence to sentence, and concept to concept. In the formal orientation the message in the receptor language should match as closely as possible the elements in the source language. The formal orientation demands high standards of accuracy and correctness.

A translation that attempts to produce a dynamic rather than a formal equivalence is based on a principle of equivalent effect. In a dynamic translation one is concerned that the relationship between the receptor and message should be the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message. Dynamic equivalence aims at naturalness of expression and relates the

receptor to modes of behavior within the context of his own culture. It does not require an understanding of the cultural patterns of the source language context. There has been a shift of emphasis from the formal to the dynamic equivalence. Between these two poles of translation there are a number of intervening grades. A formal equivalence translation is source oriented. Formal equivalence is designed to reveal the form and content of the original message. Formal equivalence translation attempts to reproduce several formal elements including grammatical units, word usage and source context meanings.

In dynamic equivalence translations the focus is not on the source message but on the receptor response. A dynamic equivalence translation conforms to the receptor language and culture.

George Steiner opposes modern linguistics and favors a literary and philosophical approach. Steiner views translation as an interpretation of the foreign text that is exploitive, sympathetic and ethically restorative. For Steiner language reconstructs meaning. Steiner is concerned with the individualistic aspects of language that resist interpretation. Steiner recommends that translators emphasize the foreignness of the text and its resistances to understanding. Steiner views translation as a hermeneutic of trust and restitution. Steiner rejects the triadic model of literalism, paraphrase and free imitation.

Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury assume that literary translations are facts of the target system. They theorize literature as a polysystem of interrelated forms and canons. Translated literature is a system in its own right, existing in relationships with original compositions. Both occupy positions in literary systems, which may be central or peripheral, and both perform literary functions, which may be innovative or conservatory. Toury seeks to describe and explain the acceptability of the translation in the receiving culture.

Translation plays a role in the formation of national cultures. Translated literature is an integral system within the literary polysystem, and is a most active system. Translation takes a central role in the literary polysystem when a literature is young and in the process of being established, when a literature is peripheral or weak and when there are turning points or crises in a literature.

Translated literature may occupy a peripheral position within the polysystem, meaning that it has no influence on major processes and is modelled according to conventional norms. Translated

literature in a peripheral position becomes a factor of conservatism. While one section of translated literature may assume a central position, another may remain peripheral. The usual position assumed by translated literature is peripheral. The social and literary status of translation is dependent upon its position within the polysystem. Translation is dependent upon the cultural system in which it occurs.

Toury states that translators play a social role. Translation behavior within a culture tends to manifest regularities. Preliminary norms are concerned with the existence and nature of a definite translation policy. Operational norms are the decisions made during the act of translation itself. Textual-linguistic norms govern the selection of material to formulate the target text and to replace the original textual and linguistic material. It is norms that determine the type of equivalence manifested by actual translations. The two major sources for a reconstruction of translational norms are textual and extratextual.

Hans Vermeer is concerned with the translators skopos or aim. The skopos is the complexly defined intention whose textual realization may diverge widely from the source text so as to reach the target culture. The success of the translation depends upon whether it is able to reach the target culture. The word skopos is a term for the aim or purpose of a translation. Fidelity to the source text is one possible skopos. The skopos can help determine whether the source text needs to be translated, paraphrased or imitated. The goal of skopos theory is to know the point of a translation. The skopos theory does not claim that a translated text should conform to the target culture and its expectations. It is the skopos that determines which text variety a translation should conform to.

Spivak gives a poststructuralist conception of language where rhetoric subverts meanings created by logic. Spivak argues that translators of third world literature need a sense of the rhetoricity of language. Spivak argues for translations that have linguistic, cultural and geopolitical difference inscribed within them. Spivak advocates literalism that gives the reader a sense of the terrain of the original. Translation ought to be done with difficulty. The translator must show the limits of the language of the text. The translator from a third world language should be in touch with the literary production in that language and be capable of distinguishing good and bad writing by women, writing that are resistant and conformist. The linguistic rhetoricity of the original text is a has political implications.

Kwame Anthony Appiah imagines a political role for literary translation. Appiah states that a good translation of a literary text preserves the features that make it worth teaching. Appiah advocates what he calls a thick translation which with its annotations locates the text in a cultural and linguistic context. This form of translation performs an ideological function in the target culture.

Translating into English, in the infinite varieties between literalism and adaptation, the translator as well as the reader can gain a deeper, more intimate understanding of the capaciousness and capabilities of the English language.

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